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## **\$1.3 Million Loan Advances Governor's Broadband Goal**

Today the Michigan Broadband Development Authority (MBDA) closed a \$1.3 million loan to M-33 Access—a wireless Internet service provider based in Rose City, Michigan. The loan will extend and improve wireless broadband service in a 10,000 square mile region stretching across one of the state's most rural and underserved regions. This expanded network (when complete) will be the largest of its kind in the country, covering the counties of Alcona, Alpena, Arenac, Crawford, Iosco, Montmorency, Ogemaw, Oscoda, Otsego and Roscommon, and some portions of Bay, Clare, Kalkaska, Missaukee, Gladwin and Presque Isle.

The financing means a region with a population in excess of 392,000 residents will now enjoy access to wireless broadband service. When fully operational, approximately 158,500 households and 9700 businesses will have access to the network. Governor Granholm's State of the State Address established a goal of expanding affordable broadband service to each corner of the state by 2007 and she lauded M-33 for its innovation in serving the region: "M-33 is a fast growing Michigan-based company that is revolutionizing how broadband can be delivered to users in an effective and cost-efficient manner. I am thrilled that the entrepreneurial spirit behind this company can be supported by the state's Broadband Authority loan. This is exactly the type of project I envisioned when challenging the Authority to help speed service to all parts of our great state."

The loan will also be used by M-33 to provide broadband service to Kirtland Community College (KCC) and the Northeast Michigan Electronic Consortium Internet Group (NEMECIG)—a consortium of 13 public school districts, the M-TEC center in Gaylord, and 2 intermediate school districts in the region. These entities will save nearly \$1 million in telecommunications costs and will have expanded and improved high-speed services as a result of this project. "I am a strong advocate for providing our students with the best possible tools to improve the quality of their education," said Glenn Wilson, President, Chief Executive Officer and founder of M-33 Access. "I am obviously excited about the project in its entirety, but often think about the new and exciting world this network will offer to students in the area." The project will provide broadband access to more than 22,000 K-12 public school students.

The vice-president of the MBDA, James Butler, III, feels this project is directly linked to the vision under which the MBDA was created. "Providing affordable broadband access to underserved regions of the state comes as a directive right from the statute creating the Broadband Authority. No other loan application typifies this directive more than this project does," said Mr. Butler. "When you talk about complete accessibility across 10 counties covering

10,000 square miles, in one of the most pristine and rural areas of our state, there is no better project that can be tied to our mission.”

M-33 Access presently serves approximately 300 wireless broadband customers and in excess of 7000 dial-up customers. It will continue its efforts offering reduced Internet accessibility costs to many of its customers. Through its Net4Kids program, it offers discounted Internet service to the parents of children in grades K-12. That same program allows customers to donate 10 percent of their monthly service fees to their school district. Additionally, the expansion will also allow M-33 Access to offer its services to the faculty and students of the areas it serves at discounted rates.

"The Governor's vision for cool cities and hot jobs throughout a Michigan connected by high-speed Internet access is further realized by this loan," said David C. Hollister, Director of the Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth. "Providers like M-33 Access are helping us ensure that high speed Internet access is a reality everywhere in Michigan by 2007."

The MBDA continues to seek out new business opportunities across Michigan to provide broadband accessibility as well as affordability. The MBDA was created to help the state attract more private sector investment in high-speed Internet infrastructure, and to increase demand for and utilization of broadband services. It does so by offering 1) low-cost loans to telecommunications companies willing to make such investments and, 2) by offering organizations or “broadband users” low-cost financing for the acquisition of hardware/software applications that will improve or increase their use of broadband service. More information about the Michigan Broadband Development Authority and its programs can be found at [www.BroadbandAuthority.org](http://www.BroadbandAuthority.org).